

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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## ALL OR NOTHING.

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&c. &c.

### CHAPTER IX. A RASH RESOLVE.

To the excitement and anger of Edward Dunstan's feelings in the first freshness of the discovery of Laura's falsehood, as he persisted in calling it, succeeded a profound depression, with which his good-humoured but utterly unsentimental companion found it very hard to deal. Not that he was disposed to make light of the blow that had fallen on Dunstan; on the contrary, he had sufficient sympathy in his nature to render him pitiful to griefs he had never felt, and tolerant of temptations which had not assailed himself; but he really did not know what to do with Dunstan.

Dunstan questioned Esdaile with reiteration under which Esdaile's patience never broke down, concerning his knowledge of the matter; and his excitement and suffering were keenly distressing to his friend, who imputed much of his want of self-command to the weakness of nerves resulting from recent illness. Dunstan had been so different when he had been badly hit that other time; he had taken the tremendous "facer" which Admiral Drummond's will had dealt him with such pluck and coolness; that it was plain he had been terribly mauled by the fever or he would never have given in like this. Thus thought Esdaile, with genuine but puzzled commiseration, as he strove to calm the excited and miserable young man, who

walked up and down the room, asking rapid questions, hardly waiting for the replies, and rebelling with every fibre of his nature against the cynical cruelty of his fate.

"How it happened that I did not guess whom you were talking of, when you told me the story, I cannot imagine," said Esdaile, after Dunstan had impatiently, almost suspiciously, expressed his surprise that the truth had so long remained concealed; "for I saw a good deal of the Chumleighs, and just about that time, too, I fancy; but the truth never occurred to me. I'm sure I might have guessed that Lady Rosa would be the very woman to make you understand that any advances to her daughter under the circumstances would be useless, but somehow I never thought of her; and Miss Chumleigh, I must say it, my dear fellow, always seemed to me to be as fancy-free as a young lady as one could see anywhere."

"I suppose she was just like the rest of them," said Dunstan, pausing for a moment in his troubled walk; "and yet—no, no, she must have been frightened into this."

"I don't know about frightened," said Esdaile, with a clear recollection of what Julia Carmichael had written to John Sandilands; "persuaded, perhaps. It looked like that."

"What looked like that?"

"Well, Miss Carmichael's account of the marriage. What a strange thing that Sandilands should never have mentioned it before you, and should have told me, whom he had no reason to suppose interested in it! Stop, though, I remember now, I saw the announcement of the marriage in one of the papers which was

sent out to me—it must have been *The Morning Post*, I suppose—and I said something to him. That led to our talking it over; you might as well have been in the room as not."

"Only I was not," said Dunstan, bitterly. "Only I was to remain a little longer in my fool's paradise; only the good fortune I was exulting in, for her sake, a thousand times more than for any other reason, was to be made a bitter disappointment by this deceitful hope. If I had known what Sandilands told you, I would never have come back to England! If I had even looked at the papers! But my mind was so full of what had happened, I looked at nothing, I thought of nothing, but the future that was never to be."

"You could not have avoided coming back to England, my dear Dunstan," said Esdaile, gravely, "and though it's very hard to be hit like this, just as you have got back, you must not let it floor you, you know. After all"—he hesitated a little, feeling that his purposed line of consolation was just a little dangerous—"she could not have been very much in earnest, or she would not have been, let us say, persuadable; and isn't it rather a one-sided kind of business, to marry a girl who might possibly change her mind? Don't get savage; I don't mean to find fault with her; girls are so bullied in all sorts of ways, especially girls with mothers like Lady Rosa; but you might think a little of that."

"Yes, I might. I might think outright what you are trying to insinuate to me, that I am better off without a wife who could be persuaded into giving me up because I had been done out of a fortune, and would presumably have married me, if the fortune hadn't come just a little too late! That is what you mean, isn't it?"

"Something like it, certainly," said Esdaile, who was much relieved by Dunstan's quick apprehension, hoping that the truth might come home to him in this way.

"Not only like it—the thing itself. And I daresay you are right; of course you must be, indeed; it is only common sense, a one-sided bargain, as you say; but still, Esdaile, it does not make it any more bearable to think of that. If she had waited for me, and we had been married, I should never have known that there was any possibility in her of changeableness."

The simplicity of this remark had in it something very pathetic to Sir Wilfrid Esdaile's mind; he understood from it

that Dunstan would be hard to cure of the wound so suddenly inflicted. And he also felt that he had nothing left to say.

"Who is this Mr. Thornton?" Dunstan asked. "I never met him—never saw him—that I know of."

Esdaile told him all he knew about Robert Thornton. It was not much of his personal knowledge. Thornton was a good sort of fellow, he believed, not of their "world" or set at all, and not, Esdaile should have thought, in the least likely to cut out Dunstan with a girl, if she had had fair play. Very rich, he believed, all ready money and no encumbrances, and in fact a great catch for Lady Rosa. As for the old colonel, he probably had nothing at all to do with it; it was generally understood that the old colonel had not much to do with anything.

"No," said Dunstan; "if we had had only the colonel to square, it would have come right enough; but he had no voice in anything, and she would never have expected him to assert himself and bring her ladyship down on him. As a matter of fact, we did not take the colonel into account one way or the other. I should not be surprised if he had never heard anything at all about it. At all events, he has heard only just what Lady Rosa chose to tell him."

"There isn't much good in discussing it, is there?" said Esdaile; "it is one of those things that it is as well not to investigate. I daresay you would find it a case of mixed motives, after all, and no one so entirely to blame as might be supposed at first sight."

"Not investigate it?" exclaimed Dunstan, angrily. "What do you mean? What do you take me for? Do you imagine, for a moment, I mean to take it so coolly as all that? Have you forgotten that this means the utter ruin of me? that the good of all that has happened is taken completely out of it, and everything is far worse with me than before?"

"I can't answer all those questions at once, my dear fellow," said Esdaile; "but I really do not forget anything you told me, and I do not underrate the effect of this disappointment on you. I merely mean that it is one of those cases in which there is absolutely nothing to be done, and nothing to be known. You have got to grin and bear it."

"There's nothing to be done, I grant you," said Dunstan, more calmly, his momentary irritation giving way before

the kindly sincerity of Esdaile's words and manner; "but that there is nothing to be known, I don't. I am not going to take this quietly, without at least knowing how it has befallen me. I will not be treated thus, without at least insisting on an explanation."

"From whom? Do you suppose Lady Rosa Chumleigh would give you an explanation of her actions with respect to her daughter, if in reality it is she who has either coerced or persuaded her into this marriage?"

"I don't mean to ask her. Lady Rosa Chumleigh may say that she owes me no explanation, and have the letter of the law on her side; she and I were fair foes. Not so her daughter, and she cannot refuse to tell me how it is I have been deceived and cheated."

Esdaile heard these angry words with considerable uneasiness. He had a notion, though he was little given to analysis, that Dunstan's was a rather weak character, and now he was about to receive practical proof that persons of weak character are not necessarily easily managed.

"Those are very strong words," he said; "are you quite sure they are justifiable? You did not make it plain to me that the girl you spoke of—Miss Chumleigh, as I now know her to have been—had engaged herself to you."

"Nor had she, if by an engagement you mean a solemn promise, formally ratified, under penalties; but she knew I loved her, and she led me to believe that she loved me, and if Admiral Drummond's will had not been what it was, she would have accepted me. If she did not make me a formal promise when all had to be given up, that she would wait for me until better times, at least she made an implied promise; she knew in her heart that I went away trusting in that promise, and believing that she placed the same trust in me; and I will know whether this has been her own doing or another's. If she has been bullied into marrying this man, or if she has done it of her own free will, having preferred him to me, I am entitled to know which of the two explanations is the true one, and I am determined to know."

"And then?" asked Esdaile, quietly, "what difference could it make to you? Would you be any the less parted? Would she be any the less lost to you?"

"No, certainly not. But cannot you understand, Esdaile, that there would be

the satisfaction of knowing that I should not be perpetually tormenting myself with questions and doubts; that I should have a better chance of getting over it, if she said to me, plainly: 'I made a mistake, and found it out. I preferred the other man.'"

"It's devoutly to be hoped she may have the sense to say just that, then, if he gets the chance of asking her, whether it's true or not," thought Esdaile.

"If I knew that she had been bullied into throwing me over, I don't know what I should do, I must pity her so much. I always did pity her; the life of a girl, with all the restrictions she must live under with a mercenary tyrant like that woman, must strike any man as being an awful thing."

"Certainly," assented Esdaile heartily, "even if he does not happen to care about the girl himself; but it must be the deuce and all if he does."

"Of course she must have been very cowardly, very weak, if it was so, but I suppose no man ever cared the less for a woman because she was capable of cowardice and weakness."

Esdaile shook his head; but this silent sign of dissent passed unnoticed by Dunstan, who went on rather as if he were talking to himself than addressing his companion:

"And if this were so, if indeed she has been driven to this, how dextrously cruel fate has been to us both, for it must have been just about the time that Mrs. Drummond died. If she had but been true to me, for a little, a very little longer! Mr. Thornton is, I suppose, much richer than I am—how strange the words sound in my own ears—but she might have found courage enough to stand out for the man she certainly would have married not so long ago. That would not have been too much to expect from her. However, this is all idle; nothing remains for me but to find out the truth."

"I wish I could persuade you," said Esdaile, earnestly, "that that is as idle as the rest; that the only wisdom in this matter is to do nothing, and say nothing, and think as little as possible. What is it you think of doing?"

"I intend to see her, and learn the truth from her."

"You can't do it, Dunstan," said Esdaile, rising, approaching Dunstan, and taking him by the arm. "You cannot do such a thing. Just think what might come of

it. For one thing, you might get her into a dreadful row with her husband."

Dunstan winced at the word.

"That's not likely; the odds are he knows nothing about me—has never heard my name. I had disappeared from the scene long before he came on, remember. Why should it make any disturbance between them that a gentleman of her acquaintance, newly returned from India, requests to be permitted to call on Mrs. Thornton?"

"Why should it? Well, Dunstan, I should have thought you could answer that question better than I. You know as much of the world as I know, and a great deal more of women and their ways. Who can tell what may or may not make a row between a man and his wife, especially if one knows nothing at all about the man? He may have a devil of a temper, in the first place, and then, you know, in this instance, there's the quite certain fact, whatever else there is, that she was in love with you, and that she either has or has not said anything to her husband about it. Now, if she has not, you will put her into a false and painful position, and if she has, I need not dwell upon the unpleasantness to all concerned."

"And how do you think it could be pleasant to all concerned?"

"I don't think anything of the kind; but, after all, in a matter like this, one can only do the best in one's power, and that by looking very carefully at it all round. If you do that, Dunstan, I think you will agree with me in the end, that both for her sake and your own, you had better not meet Mrs. Thornton."

Dunstan made him an evasive answer, and Esdaile perceived that he had not convinced him, and that, notwithstanding his own good-humoured patience with his friend, a disagreement between them might probably arise from any further discussion of the subject. Making a private resolution that he would get Dunstan off to London as early as possible on the following day, he occupied himself in writing letters, and left Dunstan to his meditations until it was time for the friends to separate for the night. Then he made a final allusion to the subject of their discussion.

"Don't think," he said, "I don't thoroughly feel for you because I have the coolness of a looker-on—I don't expect you to have that—but you will be ever so

glad hereafter, if you get the better of yourself now."

But Dunstan only said, "Good-night, Esdaile," and as his friend went up to his room, he turned out of the hotel door and walked away towards the water.

His heart was full of bitterness and anger, which even extended, beyond the cause of his desperate disappointment, to his not only guiltless but zealous friend. It was all very well for Esdaile to talk with such sound sense and cool philosophy; anyone could do that. What did he know about it? He had never had a serious trouble in all his life, and though he was a very good fellow, the best of fellows, he was not an exception to the rule that men find other men's misfortunes easy to bear. Edward Dunstan, walking quickly under the serene night sky, with the sound of the sea in his ears and the long low lines of the coast-lights flickering before his eyes, heard nothing on that night, which he was never to forget, but the rage stirring in his own heart against his fate, and saw nothing but the vision that he had cherished for so long, mocking him with its disillusion.

A few hours ago, how happy he had been; how bright the world had seemed to him; life, how full of savour! He had said to himself many times since his good fortune had come, that it was well for him he had been so unhappy, for thus he had learned to appreciate the exquisite pleasure of contrast, to enjoy to the full that satisfaction which those on whom destiny has never frowned cannot derive from her smile. And now? There was a bitter derision in that smile, and Dunstan felt that if he had heard of Laura Chumleigh's marriage while he was still a poor man serving with his regiment in India, he could have borne the blow better. It was the irony of it that hurt him so terribly now. And then as memory has such power to torment, it tormented him with the keenest remembrance of every look and word of her who was lost to him, of every hour he had passed in her society, of the wordless promises, the airy nothings, on which he had built so fair an edifice of hope. She had loved him, he swore to himself that she had loved him, and at least she had intended to be true to him. It was not all coquetry, it was not all contemptible falsehood that had merely played with him, and then availed itself of his absence to achieve the purpose of mercenary



ambition. No, Laura had been, as he said to Esdaile, weak and cowardly. She should avow it to him, she should tell him the truth; that, at least, she owed him. He did not confess to himself, while he dwelt in his thoughts on the confession to which he was determined, if possible, to force her, how large a part in this resolution his longing to see her again had. He pretended to himself that he could lose love in indignation, bury it utterly out of his sight in the anger and the condemnation that he heaped upon her, even when he excused her from the blame of complete falsehood; but it was not lost, it was not buried, it was with him living and strong, and it closed his ears to Esdaile's reasoning, and supplied him with the fallacious motives with which he justified his obstinacy to himself.

He had taken no heed of time during his walk, and stopping at last to look at his watch by the light of a cresset which marked some mending operations on the road, found that it was late. He retraced his steps to the hotel, without having decided upon how he should frame the message which was to procure him an interview with Mrs. Thornton, and on entering the hall he encountered two persons within a few steps of the door. One of these was a man of a little over thirty years of age, of gentlemanly appearance, but with nothing distinguished or remarkable about him except the full and musical tone of his voice, as he addressed his companion, a smart, nautical-looking young man, who held an unmistakably sea-going cap in his hand, though his light overcoat concealed his attire.

"Ten o'clock sharp, then," the elder gentleman was saying, as Dunstan came in at the door; "you will pick me up here."

"All right, sir. Mrs. Thornton coming aboard?"

"Not to-morrow. She cannot be ready so soon."

Dunstan passed them hastily and went into the room in which he and Esdaile had dined, leaving the door open. Presently Mr. Thornton passed the open door, and after pausing a moment to look at the barometer on the opposite wall, he walked slowly upstairs.

So, that was the man Dunstan had caught a glimpse of as he stood by the carriage; that was Laura Chumleigh's husband. Dunstan was incapable of the

vulgar spite which might have induced a meaner man to sneer at a successful rival, and discover that he was elderly and ill-favoured. He hated the man, no doubt, or at least he honestly believed that he hated him; but he could not say to himself that there was anything contemptible in the aspect of the rich "nobody" who had won the prize upon which his own heart had been so vainly set. He even found himself wondering vaguely whether Thornton was a good sort of fellow, and thinking that, if he were not, he must belie his looks.

When Esdaile and Dunstan met on the following morning, at breakfast, Dunstan was the first to refer to their conversation of the previous night, and he did so without any embarrassment.

"I am of the same mind," he said, "and I have ascertained that I shall be able to have my request for an interview conveyed to her without the risk of bringing about anything unpleasant, for Mr. Thornton is going out somewhere—to some ship or yacht."

"His own, no doubt; he has a very fine yacht, the *Firefly*, here, in Southampton Water."

"Ah, the *Firefly*! That was Miss Chumleigh's pet name; the colonel always called her by it." He tried to speak lightly, but he winced again. "Mr. Thornton is going aboard with a man who was here last night—his skipper, very likely—at ten o'clock. I heard him make the appointment, and say that she would not be ready to go. We shall see him start from the window here, and shortly afterwards I will send up my card and ask her to see me."

Esdaile did not like it, and his looks said so very plainly; but he could do nothing. He secretly hoped that Mrs. Thornton would have good sense and discretion enough to decline to see Dunstan; but remembering his friend's admission that she was cowardly and weak, he thought it was hardly likely.

"I suppose you don't see any harm in that course of proceeding?" Dunstan added, in a slightly aggressive tone.

"No harm, precisely; but it might be awkward if you gave it the look of watching until Thornton is out of the way. However, she will know best the sort of man she has to deal with, and will keep as clear of a scrape as she can under the circumstances."

At ten o'clock precisely Mr. Thornton

was standing in the hall, again examining the barometer; and presently he was joined by his companion of the previous evening. Immediately afterwards they left the hotel.

"Now," said Dunstan, and he drew a card from his pocket-book.

"Stay a minute," said Esdaile. "You must really let me do a little bit of acting here. We must account for knowing that Mrs. Thornton is in the house."

He rang the bell, and put a question to the waiter.

"That gentleman just gone out is Mr. Thornton, the owner of the Firefly, is he not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is Mrs. Thornton here with him, or is she on board the yacht?"

"Mrs. Thornton is here, sir."

"You're in luck," turning to Dunstan. "You really have stumbled on your friends. I thought you could not be mistaken. Do you happen to know when Mr. Thornton will be in?"

"Not till late, sir. Going for a sail, sir."

"That's unlucky," again turning to Dunstan, "as we must be off to-day. You had better ask when Mrs. Thornton can see you."

Dunstan wrote a line on his card, which he handed to the waiter, directing him to send it at once to Mrs. Thornton. The man left the room, and during his absence, which lasted fully ten minutes, Esdaile and Dunstan did not exchange a word.

The man returned at length with a verbal message. Mrs. Thornton's maid had told him to say that her mistress could see the gentleman from India in half an hour.

## A PASTORAL IN GREEN.

### AIX-LES-BAINS.

THE green mountains gird in Aix-les-Bains—the Alps of Grenoble and of Italy—mountains very peaked, very jagged in outline, tossed about indeed, and varied in form to eccentricity, like the loved Sicilian chain running along the sea-board from Messina to Catania, beckoning one across those magic straits bounding the island of bliss.

Now, when I compare any mountains with those of Sicily, I intend it as especial praise. These before me at Aix have beauties of their own. Not only sympathetic outlines, but melodious colouring: symphonies in grey rock; chorales in green

grove and bosky dingle, in gurgling stream, and in rushing river; dirges in dusky ravine and sombre forest, where nightingales chant. The purple tints too, so charming among hills, cling to these Savoyard Alps willingly; purple shadows that gather as the afternoon sun lowers, the green tints showing through like shot silk.

The Lake of Bourget, shut out from the friendly little town of Aix by a long-shaped, envious, bowery hill, has much to do with the purple tints. Purple mountain-tints show up readily from sea, lake, or big broad river; a friendly understanding, as it were, between sky and water, reflected on mountain-sides. Those purple shadows are very dear to me—be it in fierce, reddish colour on bare volcanic ranges of the south, with no mantle but cactus, aloe, and palm; or on round-headed chestnut-clothed Pyrenees, striking deep roots into Spanish plains; or amid the folds of the snow-crowned Jungfrau; or, as at Aix, with that underlying richness of untrod-den emerald lawn and rough woodland.

Round the Lake of Bourget, and clinging about Aix, are belts and groves of sycamore and fir, walnut and ash, limes fragrant with blossoms, and lofty poplars shaking in the breeze; each mountain-tree forming a brick as it were in green walls, out of which the houses, and the little châteaux, the Etablissement des Bains, the cathedral, the hotels, grow up like mushrooms in a water-meadow.

Within the narrow valley lies the primitive little town, hidden in and out in this leafy labyrinth. The town and its mineral sulphur baths are as old as the Romans; an arch stuck up grandly among magnolia-trees, with an hotel opposite, named after it *De l'Arc Romain*, are ocular evidence of this fact of ancient history, without searching in dictionaries or guide-books. The town of Aix, the Lake of Bourget, along whose banks run the mountain-chain, and the continental rail from Turin, Modane, and Culoz, to Geneva and Paris, fill the valley wholly. Nothing can be more discrepant in this peaceful greenery, made habitable by homes with carved weatherboards, outside stairs, galleries, and walls pierced in a friendly spirit with holes for pigeons, than the whistling and puffing, and the blue smoke column-ing up suddenly out of banks of trees full of nightingales in full song. Down the entire length of old Savoy it runs; this great continental line leading, in fact, everywhere. But the everlasting hills and

the greenly-mantled cliffs stand all the same, protesting and unassimilating.

On the opposite side of Aix from the lake, and backing the valley and the town in that direction, rises a precipitous wall of basaltic cliffs, running in shaded streaks like the Giant's Causeway, with just a fringe of green here and there, more black, indeed, than green, very grave and sad. Now, at sunset, this stern line of cliffs takes to itself wonderful pink tints, as pale and fine as the inside of a shell, tints that shadow off into a mysterious grey as the sun goes down, like a chant of solemn music over departing day, only one hears nothing—nothing but the birds in the thick woods of Marlioz chirruping themselves to sleep, the measured hoot of the owl, shrill as a soul in pain, the running of many brooks into the lake, and the low croak of frogs in the brake. The universal greenness, and the fresh airs that come wafting with it, contain elements of repose to troubled minds, to be felt, not painted even with a pen. Why should there be such a charm in Nature's tints of green? Why does green rock you, cradle-like, to rest—make your very soul expand into realms of peace—lap you in mysterious luxuries, calm you, resign you, conquer you? I cannot tell.

The green groves, the grassy meadows, the smell of new-mown hay, the pale tassels of the limes swaying in the sunshine, the green fringe of flags and grass bordering a stream, the rush of wind through leafy trees, come as a balm. Even the pastoral tranquillity of the peaceful dun oxen, with full, pathetic eyes, has a charm. How I love it all, looking up to the lofty green outlines of such mountains as are zig-zagging before me! The good Nature's "green" does one is quite independent of mountain ranges; it lies in plain, forest, garden, hedge, park, or glen, and may be experienced on any summer day. The sun darting on a semi-transparent leaf, flecking a bank of tree-tops, picking out the details of a copper-beech bough, or spangling the expanse of a rich grassy meadow by sullen, silent streams—that is the sort of "green" I love! The heavens—endless, spanless, incalculable—the waters of the ocean—vast, mighty, measureless—are blue. Yet neither the blue heavens nor the azure sea are full of rest like this green earth. Green is a nocturne that Nature plays with her silent, invisible fingers, but plays in such floods of melody, that the whole soul drinks it in.

We are but poor creatures, and we cannot bear too much. Does not the grass grow green over new graves? And do not lime-trees grow tall and fair in churchyards?

As I write, I see some velvety touches of light upon a lawn, high on a mountain-side—an intense touch here and there that thrills through me. How smooth and pathetic in its great calm! I care for that greenness more than for the brilliant rose-bed—red, white, pink—at my back. The roses are of action, movement, passion; but those quiet distant lawns, unknown, untrodden, in their green quietude, oh, how they still me!

Aix is one street, and that street is all hotels. Not stuck-up hotels, but friendly little homes where you may sun yourself after too frequent rain, on the doorstep, or wander out to shop, or bathe, or meet a friend, or eat—if in a "dependance"—bareheaded, just as you are. There is a certain charm in strolling through umbrageous gardens or on the homely flags, to a perfect dinner served by perfect cooks, a union of many attributes of town and country piquant to the palate jaded by city life. A more sociable, peaceful little place I never beheld than Aix. The good, ugly, square-shouldered Savoyard looks on smiling and quite unmoved at the world's fair enacted in this narrow little street. The long tails of the Paris "élégantes" sweeping the pavement, the assumption of the dowdy English mother and her ill-dressed daughters, the evil-faced men come to be cured of evil lives, the dandy, the gandin—what are these to the primitive Savoyard? The Savoyard looks and wonders, passes and smiles. He turns his strong back to its burden, his foot towards its labour, his sleek, dun cow—as quiet and peaceful as himself—at his heels; he draws his fishing-net from the lake, or shoots birds in the abundant woods, or he makes hay; later he will plough and harrow and dig, stolid, unmoved, honest, hard-working as an ox—the good home-lovingsimple soul! He envies no man; he drinks his sour wine in peace under his wooden gallery, in the cool evening-tide, and lets the world wag on!

A wonderful nation is Savoy! So abutting on France, so with its foot in Italy, knocking at the door of Switzerland—and yet different from all. Not versatile, capricious, and vain, like the Gaul, nor greedy and stupid like the Swiss, nor artistic and idle like your handsome

Italian; but steady, ugly, unmoved in strong individuality, content with what God gives him, true, virtuous, brave; a nation of philosophers—if to be content is indeed philosophy. A more respectable citizen than your Savoyard does not exist. He will do his duty under any government and towards any nationality, "like a man."

## CASINO.

"You call that a Casino?" cries Mrs. O'Dowd—her husband is in the Hundred-and-twentieth Foot, and just arrived from Bombay, lame of both feet. Mrs. O'Dowd looks up at the Casino, and tosses her head.

Major O'Dowd calls Aix altogether "a hole."

Mrs. O'Dowd continues: "A Casino! Why, it's nothing but a low-roofed bungalow in a gravel fore-court. Our mess-room at Kurrachee was chalks to cheese better than that."

Yes, my dear Mrs. O'Dowd, you speak according to your lights; but do you count for nothing, Mrs. O'Dowd, that lovely avenue of orange-trees, which leads to the Casino door, white with blossoms, the scent pervading the air in the little main street, and penetrating into odd crevices and mysterious alleys inhabited by cooks—out-scenting onions and other unholy condiments? Do you count for nothing, Mrs. O'Dowd, that broken line of Savoyard Alps behind, sparkling like emeralds in the sun; that glorious bank of trees, rising up between town and mountain; and the blue heavens over all, sown with fleecy clouds? Do you call that nothing, Mrs. O'Dowd? because, if you do, I do not agree with you!

A Casino!—wicked word—does seem an anomaly in pastoral Savoy; but the thing in itself is perfectly idyllic. The Cerberus in livery—good man—snores in the portico. The director lolls in a chair outside, smelling a bouquet. Green without, green within, green through every open window, green through every door and every corridor, green as a vista to the ball-rooms and galleries, where one can read the papers, or doze in every species of lounge; altogether, a most peaceful greenery.

A little very mild play goes on, sometimes in some shabby back rooms which no one appears to frequent, on the part of gentlemen imperfect in the way of feet—all the men at Aix are imperfect in their feet, and waddle about on sticks and crutches, yet, strange to say, at the moment

of writing, I cannot recall one lame woman—add to this, ball saloons and reading and retiring rooms en suite, which to the simple Savoyard mind are palatial, and your imagination grasps the Casino.

A garden lies behind, treeful, with fountains amid grass and lilies; verdant creepers twining on walls and trellises; red roses, flapping you on the nose—flapped in their turn by the warm damp breeze. The green shadows of the everlasting hills and the grey-tinted basaltic rocks overshadow the Casino sadly, as with a pensive charm.

Music, dancing? Yes; a dull band every evening affects to play Bach, Haydn, Verdi, Gounod, Meyerbeer; but the whole results in such a thin scraping of fiddles, that it all sounds alike—a triumphal march or a lullaby, a sonata or a jig, all "tasting" like a dinner of fish, flesh, and fowl cooked in the same pot, with the same sauce. I declare, sitting on a bench, listening, I cannot tell whether it is symphony appassionata, or stretto furioso, or the Dead March in Saul. All is slurred over in the same lazy way, without taste and without emphasis. The bald-headed leader—I have no doubt he is lame, I have not seen him walk, but he is certainly lame—a man as of late nights and vinous suppers, lazily wielding his bâton, presents the aspect of one who has eaten and craves repose; his band are used-up machines. An Italian did, by mistake, play on the violin with passion the other night. I assure you the impression was painful. It did not suit the place; we all felt it discordant; we were glad when it ceased. The poor man, who had forgotten himself in his art, mopped his face and looked round, infinitely dismayed by the faint conventional applause—a knocking of sticks and boot-heels, languidly caught up at different angles and fading off into garden-bowers. If he had expected something more he did not get it.

We were much more comfortable during the performance of a long-haired, flaccid-faced monsieur on the piano, who played as if the keys were wool and his hands dummies. What scores of variations he did wander through, that monsieur!—as aimlessly as a bubbling brook, coming to an end with a sudden thump, which made us start and woke up the bald conductor, who grasped wildly at his bâton, then stared round amazed upon his band, who, in their turn, contemplated him with alarmed visages.



The dancing, too, is all in the same easy, lazy way. A few fat officers from Chambéry lead out a few married women. Mrs. O'Dowd likes the dancing—the heat and the officers remind her of the mess-balls at Bombay. Mrs. O'Dowd and her blue bonnet (she wears a really remarkable blue bonnet) take place as young and lovely in that society of *femmes de quarante ans*. She foots it bravely, does Mrs. O'Dowd; and has quite a little succès d'estime. No lazy dancing suits Mrs. O'Dowd; dragging her partner after her, she prances up and down the spacious floor as if she were storming a battery. The tall English "mees" looks on, and the round-shouldered English papa puts spectacles on nose "to look out for a pretty woman"—whom he does not see. What the natives think, or your travelled Frenchman speaking a little Parisian argot, you can see from the polite disdain of pinched-up nose and contemptuous moustached lip.

The Terpsichorean performance, meanwhile, turns round and round like the little wooden figures outside a barrel-organ. When Mrs. O'Dowd dances, it affects the company spasmodically and painfully, like the unfortunate and misplaced Italian who played so earnestly on his violin. I must say, when I smelt the orange-flowers, and saw that the "direction" wore a hat, broad-brimmed like a Quaker, and gaiters, I drew my own conclusions as to the gaiety of the Casino.

One can be bored at one's hotel—it is useless to pay for one's boredom. I prefer spending my evenings in the green depths of the woods, under the purple fastnesses of the mountains, down by leafy Marlioz, where bubble the sulphur-springs, inside a species of pump-room. I do not advise the pump-room—the stench is horrible, and ought to cure all kinds of disorders; but Marlioz outside is lovely. The high road to Chambéry runs by the spacious park, crowded with scented trees, loved by the nightingales, who sing all to themselves among the leaves, in unison with many streams and brooklets, all bound to the Lake of Bourget—whither I follow them, until night comes.

#### FÊTE DIEU.

I WAS awoke out of my usually quiet sleep at six o'clock this morning by a stamping to and fro from the outside stone terrace to the passage—a stamping as of sabots on energetic feet—which echoed to my brain.

What could make the man—two men, I am sure—stamp up and down at that hour? Such a thing never happened before, and I resented it.

When I got up I found the broad stone terrace on which my window opens, with its umbrageous trees, ample balustrade, and flight of steps, bared. What metamorphosis was this? What did it portend? All the flower-pots and leaf-pots, painted delicately green, were gone. The stamping had been occasioned by carrying these pots off to a kind of wooden stage, erected in a bare spot beside the hotel—a "reposoir," as it was called, for the Host. The bare deals of this reposoir gradually assumed the appearance of a gaudy altar, lined with plants. Industrious Pierre had carried these, stamping his heels in his work. Thus he had awoke me.

When I remonstrated with hard-featured, square-shouldered, red-cheeked Pierre, he answered: "*Madame, que voulez-vous? C'est le Bon Dieu!*" What he means by this I cannot explain; nor, I suspect, could he. The stamping was the way he said his morning prayer. I am sure I did not pray in listening.

Religion has strange developments. I imagine that Madame Bonne, the housekeeper, supposed she was also discharging part of the ritual of her faith in weaving thick garlands of ivy leaves, assisted by neat, quiet, white-capped Jeannette, who creeps about the housework like a mouse.

On a bench in the passage sat these two, weaving very sorry garlands. The Bon Dieu was not offered any of the lovely roses, nor indeed any blossoms at all. The ivy—dull, draggling, monotonous—was good enough. The flowers were required for persons of the world—customers. Pierre's enthusiasm had not affected Madame Bonne, wreathing her wreath. She was quite cold-blooded and calculating in her work. Pierre's stamping cost him nothing. Persons of his class love to make a noise, as much as persons above his class hate the noise made.

Although it was the Fête Dieu, the usual bathers went to and fro in their tucked-up tents, carried on men's shoulders up and down the narrow street. The bathing was more sacred than the fête. The bathing put money in Savoyard pockets, therefore the Bon Dieu must wait until bathing hours were over. Pierre's stamping was a species of amateur piety that robbed no man—only me of my sleep.

By the time Madame Bonne's funereal garlands were finished and carried out by Jeannette to the little reposoir, our narrow little street, and another narrow little street, running straight from our door up to the "Etablissement des Bains"—where you are thumped in all your members by stalwart Savoyards, and pumped on, and douched, as if flesh were a crime to be done away with, and you were henceforth to live at freedom, in your bones—had quite changed their aspect. Groups of homely, ugly, well-washed, stolid-faced Savoyards collected before doors; the national costume, black lace cap, winged, and short skirts, showing off a singularly rotund personality, ending in thick boots, emerged here and there. Shutters were put up at the shop-windows, and a general hush of expectancy pervaded the air. The reposoir each moment assumed a more gorgeous appearance—of course a central point of attraction to "nos bons villageois."

Anent these "villageois," you may look from the green mountains of Modane to the purple Lake of Bongel, over the symmetrical fields dotted with mulberry-trees, through the sinuosities of the emerald valleys, along the longest of the many avenues that lead out of Aix—and not see one pretty face. Beauty and Savoyard are decreed as everlasting lines into space—never to meet.

As half-hours went by, more groups gathered in the little streets. The waiters sneaked out of the hotel doors, and many of the company windows and doorways began to fill. As to the road, they would not allow a carriage to pass for the world. It is a silent, sullen, inward emotion, but emotion all the same.

When the church-bell had tolled a preparatory note (a kind of mangled sheep-call), the sound of music rose through the air—a sound very nasal and very solemn. "The procession has started!" Pierre exclaimed ecstatically; and as he spoke he rushed to the terrace and seized two other flower-pots, one under each arm, as if his conscience pricked him, marching off with them to the reposoir; while Madame Bonne hammered in a few more nails to sustain that most funereal of wreaths. A man in black actually lit the candles and gave a tilt to a blue and red Virgin out of perpendicular. Then he bolted.

The singing in the direction of the park grew now into a high treble. There

were bass voices, very gruff indeed and surly, with nothing whatever of music in them. This kind of thing does not do out of Italy. The simple, staring town-folk thickened in the street, and then formed themselves into an avenue. A dog which bit another dog, making it howl, was severely chastised. Cats rushed about bewildered, and also received condign punishment. Something is going on, and they want to hear and to see like their betters. "Mais, que voulez-vous?" as Pierre said. "C'est le Bon Dieu"—a kind of philosophy very impressive, when no one understands what it means.

The first sight of the procession came from beneath the trees—a background of green. Your Savoyard is born, lives and dies—all in green. The very shadows on the lake are green; and the fruit and flowers have a calm green tinge, infinitely reposing.

Expect no details of the procession from me. Everyone has seen processions, as far as priests and baldaquin and gilt crowns and banners and incense-bearers go; but there are processions and processions. The good Savoyard, with his mediæval simplicity, struck out quite a new idea. Not only were all the old women of Aix caught and covered with black veils and mantles, and made to carry torches—well held out for fear of grease—but all the pretty little children had been caught also by the same municipal hands to play their parts also—atoms of two and three years old, just able to creep, in robes of glistening gold, each carrying a golden flower, or a wheat-ear, a star, or a palm. Some tiny children, with careful mothers, added a parasol for the sun. The parasols marred the effect of the rich robes and glossy childish curls, so well combed out and frizzed down the little backs, and the flower garlands placed on the innocent little heads. The number of these little ones was amazing. On and on they toddled, well down the centre of the street, hundreds of them from end to end of Aix. Sometimes two little golden frocks got hitched together, or two little coral fingers clasped helped each other on. Sometimes the line got very confused, when a volley of black-veiled matrons, ugly as sin, came down like a sombre storm-cloud among the white-clad figures and marred their symmetry. But gentle nuns, with linen-bordered pale faces and cold modest eyes, came to the rescue. Gently they separated the little clasping fingers from each other—putting each

golden baby in its place; and a little less gently they waved back the cloud of black old women, and their veils and candles, with a "Trop vite, mesdames, replacez-vous."

What is so delightful about the golden children is that there are so many of them. The gravity and indifference with which they step out is surprising. Were these little children fresh from the courts of heaven? and was this Fête Dieu but an echo of the pageants at which they had so lately figured in paradise? Who can tell?

Seeing these miraculously steady golden babies so adapted to their work. I was by no means amazed to behold a fat fair child—three years old, perhaps—of a most comfortable aspect, file by alone; its flaxen curls set with a crown of big spiked thorns, its innocent, chubby little face bespattered with daubs of red paint, a dark-coloured cross lying on one shoulder. Nor was I amazed, either, to see this little personage followed by another infant, stripped to its waist, wearing a strip of white curly lamb-skin ("camel's hair" not procurable at Aix, and false counterfeits disdained by matter-of-fact angels, carrying green parasols) over one little shining shoulder, leaving the other bare. A pilgrim's flask dangled on its lamb-skin skirt, and a toy lamb, on red wooden rollers, was tucked under one tiny arm. Not at all surprised was I, I assure you, nor was the child. St. John had a miraculous gift of gravity, and a swing in his walk, quite delightful to behold, as emblematic of the desert. The easy contempt with which he treated that toy lamb on red rollers under his arm was perfect. St. John was a very pretty child, about four, and appeared as an old and practised hand, repeating a well-known performance. He turned his blue eyes about from right to left, and was especially careful to distance a green parasol held by a neighbouring golden robe, as derogatory to the prophetic dignity of his rôle.

What became of the others I do not know; but, arrived in front of our hotel, St. John planted his two little feet on the ground, clutched his elbow over his toy lamb, and fell to contemplating the reposoir (decorated by Pierre and Madame Bonne, and now resplendent with priest, incense, and lights, and flowers) with the air of a critic and a connoisseur.

#### HÔTEL DE L'EUROPE.

If you come to Aix, descend—as the phrase goes—at the Hôtel de l'Europe. It

is like a benevolent octopus, extending its tentacles all over Aix for the benefit of strangers. There is the hotel proper, in the narrow main street—a vast establishment, with a "salle" three hundred feet long, but, withal, a most friendly, comfortable caravanseraï. In a square of chestnut-trees, behind the hotel—a summer parlour, with leafy roof—a large chalet displays its carvings and outside wooden galleries. In the corner of a flowery grove, stretching downhill from the chestnuts, your eye lights on another chalet—a sweet, secluded little place, set in green—with rose parterres, emerald grass, waving boughs, and a glitter of sunshine.

Nor is this all. Still another dependence!—a big villa (this one at the bottom of the hill), all windows, and doors, and terraces, and flights of stairs—the Château des Fleurs, ladies and gentlemen, rising out of magnolias, pines, palms, and orange-trees; gurgling waterfalls and fountains everywhere, backed by an horizon of violet Alps, rising from a living bank of trees—the "spécialité" of Aix.

The Château des Fleurs is the final effort of the octopus Hôtel de l'Europe. I shall propose this name to our most kind landlady, Madame B——, a dear little agile woman, with black lace on her head, who passes life running about like a good fairy, along with her niece, Mademoiselle Honorine, the gentlest and softest of mortals, always cramming your hands with bonbons and roses. To say these people are kind is to say nothing. How they harden themselves to make out the weekly bills is my astonishment. Fancy drawing Mademoiselle Honorine aside, and proposing a "pension" gratis! Poor little soul! how she would shrink from saying "No," and refer gently to "ma tante," so as to throw the pain of a refusal on her shoulders.

You must be ill to know the depths of these good people's benevolence—not charged as an item in the bill, as I have known benevolence elsewhere. If ill, rose-leaves shower upon you, as upon the tables of the Roman emperors, and little dishes of fruit are introduced surreptitiously, as in the manner of cheating the establishment, and delicacies improvised for jaded, sickly appetites. You are all but placed in a strait-waistcoat, and fed with a spoon. The waiters, taking their tone from Madame B—— and Mademoiselle Honorine, watch every morsel. "Si Madame essaie, peut-être Madame pourra," &c.;

"Ça fait tant de bien de voir Madame manger;" "Ah! ce plat n'est pas au goût de Madame! Que peut on faire pour plaire à Madame?" All in this tune, with many variations.

I must not say too much, or I shall be suspected of a share in the profits of the establishment—an accusation I sorrowfully deny.

One discordant note in the harmony of this melody is the butler, Octave—"the garçon en chef" of the table d'hôte. Octave is stern, self-contained, silent. He is young, dark-haired, and heavy-browed. He never smiles, nor coughs, nor have I ever heard him hem, or even sniff. Octave appears inaccessible to all human weakness. Perhaps Madame B—— has—knowing the natural tenderness of her heart, also the sympathetic tenderness of quiet, dove-eyed Honorine, with the silvery-toned voice—engaged Octave expressly, as a foil to herself and her own overbrimming humanity. Perhaps Octave has imposed himself upon Madame B——, against her will, "for this season only." I cannot tell; but Octave is a discord.

When you are late at dinner, Octave silently takes his watch out of his pocket, and fixes you in a stern gaze, taking care not to serve you for such a space of time as affords full scope to the gnawings of hunger and remorse. If you are taking what he considers an over-helping of ice or fruit, Octave appears miraculously at your back, no matter from whence, and draws the dish significantly from your hands. If you are too long in finishing, he seizes on your plate, as by mistake, and bears it off, too quickly for remonstrance.

It is Octave's habit, when not thus especially engaged, to place himself at the door, surveying the waiters serving at the two long tables, as a commander surveys his brigades, critically, as to the slightest flaw or blemish. From under lowering eyebrows Octave casts fixed glances at the agitated and rushing file of white-cravated waiters—you can see them trembling in their well-cleaned shoes. To fly past him breathless is their habit. The wonder is that they do not habitually lose their footing and sprawl upon the floor.

One day—Sunday—lunch was late, and the company ravenous. They showed it by all collecting in the "salon de lecture," and staring aimlessly at each other. Madame B——, always rushing about—the black lace on her head flying like two wings, indicative of her angelic attributes

—observed, as by instinct, the state of things.

"Toute le monde a bien faim," I heard her whisper to Octave. "Servez donc 'le lunch.'" The Spartan-hearted menial drew back, and eyed his mistress as if putting miles between them. For a few minutes he found no words to reply, then Octave brought the full power of his eyes to bear on Madame B——, as on a waiter loitering with a course.

"Madame," he uttered at last, in a deliberate voice, "Dimanche le lunch est à une heure; on ne peut pas devancer l'heure."

Madame B—— retired, silenced and discomfited.

Did it ever happen to you at a table d'hôte to hate utterly harmless and innocent persons to that extent that you left the hotel? I once did this at Taormina.

Spite of the wondrous beauties of that enchanting spot, spite of Græco-Romano theatre; Etna, in all its snow-capped majesty; the finest prospect in the world, including a sea of sapphire and turquoise, Calabrian mountains and valleys opposite, and beneath gardens bordering the golden strand—I fled. A Norwegian, two Germans, male and female, and an English spinster, did it. The Germans sat opposite, the Norwegian and the spinster at my side.

I have not fled from Aix, because I am not alone. I might fail to impress my companion with the weight of my reason; but I loathe, abhor, execrate, and abominate all the same. Life is become a burden to me, food poisonous, my meals torture, because of a woman who sits opposite. She is old, she is ugly, she is ill-dressed, she is cross. Her mouth is the largest I ever saw, and is full of teeth; her eyes are deep-set, lustreless, cavernous; her skin coarse and red. Heavens! why does she bind her thin locks round her old head like a Hebe? Why does she pin herself up in little white wrappers, with coloured bows behind, à l'ingénue? Why does she array herself in jewels, and don an evening robe trimmed—by all the gods!—with flowers at a table d'hôte, when we sit down in homespun? Why does she cast sheep's-eyes around? And why does she think the man next to her—young enough to be her son, and lame, of course—in love with her? Why does she languish and sparkle, gambol and contort herself like an old idol? If that woman is not enough to make me fly from Aix, I will trouble you



to tell me to what length human endurance can attain.

If the Spartan butler were less Spartan I would bribe him with many golden pieces to put me anywhere else; but I know beforehand that Octave is invulnerable. He would refuse my gold pieces, and insist upon the inviolability of the table d'hôte. To him each place is as sacred as a seat among the gods assembled on high Olympus. No hope! As I mount higher and higher up the consecrated board, she mounts after me—the man beside her, the sheep's-eye, the languisher, the husband—for there is a useless, toothless, white-haired old husband, who calls this lump of affectation "Love." I sit on; I boil over; I gnash my teeth; I tear my hair, figuratively; I curse her, myself, Octave, the company. Yet I sit on. Heaven and earth! was ever such a fate? The rail is within a few yards, at the bottom of the garden—the great continental railway, leading everywhere. I hear the whistle in the dead of night; I see the smoke rising from the trees as I walk abroad; and I sit on. Pity me.

If you hear of a "harrowing suicide" at Aix; "agonising particulars" telegraphed from the railway station, "by our own correspondent," it is I.

Driven to despair, I shall have rushed down and laid my body on the rails to die!

#### IN HARVEST TIME.

I SAT one morning in a little lane,  
Under a canopy of bramble leaves,  
I watched the reapers on the heavy wain  
Pile high, with cheerful toil, the golden sheaves.  
The eager little children stood around,  
With tiny harvest gleanings of the corn  
Under their arms, sheafwise, with poppies bound,  
Their mimic labour all the merry morn.  
I watched the slow-drawn, bounteous load depart,  
The children following down the shady lane;  
And, left alone, I asked my empty heart,  
"Where are thy gathered sheaves of ripened grain?  
Why comes no sound of harvest joy to thee?"  
But my dumb heart no answer had for me.  
"Heart," said I further, "there was good seed sown  
Deep in thy furrows ere last winter's snow,  
And in the springtime tender airs were blown  
Across thee, and God gave thee summer glow.  
Where is thine harvest of good things and true,  
The fruit of this thy ground which God hath tilled,  
The crown of work appointed thee to do,  
The sheaves wherewith His garner should be filled?  
Where is thy harvest joy, thy reaping song,  
Thy blameless triumph over honest spoil?  
Thy deep contentment satisfied and strong,  
Thy worthy resting after worthy toil?  
He who gave seedtime would thy harvest see."  
Yet still my heart no answer made to me.  
But ere the autumn seedtime came again,  
God smote the furrows of my silent heart,  
The ploughshares of strong sorrow and sharp pain  
Delved deeply, striking to the inmost part;

Wherein full soon the good seed gently fell,  
The which my heart received repentant, grave,  
And brought to fruit in season duly—well—  
And God the increase of that harvest gave.  
What though in weariness my sheaves were bound  
With faded flowers of happiness and love,  
What though within my heart no song was found,  
A reaper's joy in harvesting to prove?  
An angel lighted on the new-reaped sod,  
And bare the blessed first-fruits up to God!

#### BOXHILL AND ITS PICNICS.

BEFORE our garden gate, situated at the foot of one of the most picturesque and renowned hills in the southern counties of England, there annually pass during the months of June, July, and August, about fifty or sixty thousand people of both sexes and all ages, bound every one of them for a day's pleasure in the open air, and most of them for a picnic on the grass, and under the shadow of the trees. Every year the numbers increase, the most notable addition to the multitude having been contributed by the operations of the Bank Holidays Act, due, as those who profit by it gratefully acknowledge, to the philanthropic exertions of a gentleman whom they call "St. Lubbock."

But long before the days of St. Lubbock, Boxhill was frequented on certain days in the fine weather by all the overflow of industrious London, that is too poor, or too cramped for money and leisure, to overflow to the Continent, to the lakes of Westmoreland, to the Highlands of Scotland, or even to the seaside, but that is not too poor to afford a trip to the hills and dales of Surrey; or too proud and independent to accept a holiday provided for them by the generosity of their employers, or by the philanthropy of well-to-do people. Happily there are many of these who think it is not consistent either with the health, or the morals, of the rising generation, that hundreds of thousands of children in our densely-packed manufacturing centres should never have a chance of frolicking upon the grass, of plucking the wild-flowers, or of seeing a lovely landscape stretching twenty or thirty miles before and around them, instead of the weary brick houses of frowzy alleys or pestilent streets, in which their busy lives are passed.

From my garden I am enabled to study the manners, the behaviour, and the idiosyncrasies of my fellow-creatures. In this study I not only find enjoyment, but very abundant reason for denying the truth of the old saying that the English people amuse themselves in a very melancholy

manner. Possibly in dingy London, the amusements of the poor and humble are sad enough, but when once the poor and humble emancipate themselves from bricks and mortar, and get out into the green fields, with the daisies and buttercups under their feet, and a clear blue sky over their heads, or, better still, a blue sky flecked and variegated with fleecy white clouds, their amusement is far more joyously exuberant than sad or sombre. At least, such is the result of my observation on the slopes of Boxhill.

Boxhill itself deserves mention before I speak of the many crowds who flock to it almost every summer day, but who descend upon it by rail, by van, and by coach, in human avalanches, every Saturday and Monday, and not unfrequently on Sunday. Boxhill rises gently from the outer margin of the quaint little village of Mickleham, towards Dorking and Betchworth, until it reaches an altitude of about four hundred feet above the level of the River Mole, which runs like a brook at its base. From the summit are to be obtained on one side a panoramic view of the valley of the Mole, which runs through a beautiful country until it discharges itself into the Thames at Moulsey, opposite to Hampton Court. In front are Deepdene and Denbies; a little to the right is Norbury Park with noble trees, and among others, a grove of yew-trees, sometimes called the Druid's Grove, in which there stands one splendid tree, reputed on scientific authority to be at least eighteen hundred years old. On the other side lies extended below, large portions of the counties of Surrey, Kent, and Sussex, with Leith Hill, about seven hundred feet high, and the range of heights known as the "Hog's Back" in the foreground, and on the edge of the horizon, the downs which overlook Lewes and Brighton, and hide the view of the sea, that but for them would be dimly visible. The hill and its continuations are so spacious and so beautifully wooded, that ten thousand Robin Hoods and Maid Marians might occupy all their green recesses, and be invisible from the adjoining highway. At the foot of the hill, at the steepest part of the ascent on the bank of the Mole, is one of the most picturesque wayside inns in England, with a beautifully kept garden under the beetling forehead of an almost precipitous cliff. The place was a favourite resort nearly eighty years ago of the renowned Lord Nelson, and here John Keats took lodgings when

engaged on the composition of his beautiful *Endymion*. The view from the summit of Boxhill has only one defect—there is no water in the landscape. The Mole is scarcely seen, and is but a rivulet at the best. Were there but a lake in the foreground, there would not be a rival to the beauty of the scenery anywhere to the south of Westmoreland.

The rail, of course, is the cheapest mode of locomotion between London and the Surrey hills, and is patronised accordingly by the benevolent people, who, at the urgent entreaties of East End clergymen, contribute their guineas or their shillings to provide the small boys and girls of the slums with an outing. But when the funds subscribed will allow for the extra luxury—the "van's the thing"—the van with banners, and an attempt at a band of music in the front, or at the least, some amateur players on the corneopean or the cornet-à-piston, or even on the bugle or the big drum, who discourse such music as they can accomplish all the way from London. When the vans stop, at the point where the first view of the broad green back of the hill is obtained, a shrill shout from the juvenile multitude expresses their joy at the sight of an eminence which, to their unaccustomed eyes, looms large enough to be reputed a mountain. These parties generally come provided with bountiful supplies of biscuits, cheese, eggs, gingerbread, cakes, oranges, apples, milk, ginger-beer, and water. No water is to be procured on the hill, and the supply which they bring all the way from London is destined for the great event of the afternoon—the making of tea, gipsy fashion, in an iron pot, suspended by a triangle over a fire of dried sticks and branches gathered upon the hill, the flame and smoke of which seem to afford as much pleasure to the onlookers as a scene of diablerie in a pantomime. When the joyful event is over, and the young people are summoned by toot of horn, or other preconcerted signal, to the rendezvous where the vans await them, they generally make their appearance with garlands of grasses or young twigs of trees around their hats or bonnets, and nosegays of daisies and buttercups in their hands, not always unintermingled with flowers from the hedges, or with roses and honeysuckles from the unprotected palisades of such rural gardens as have tempted them to trespass. As such children often come in swarms of five or

six hundred at a time, it is not an over-calculation, as far as I can judge, to say that at least ten thousand of them visit Boxhill during the three finest months of the year.

Next to the children, the most constant visitors are working men, with their wives and families, employed at the great industrial establishments of London, who enjoy what they call their annual "Beanfeast," at their own expense or at that of their employers—most commonly of the latter. Let it not be supposed that these people feast on beans, with the accessories of bacon or beef, or other substantial food, or that they thus enjoy themselves more frequently at the time when beans are in season than at any other, as is generally represented by antiquaries and philologists, who think they know and can explain everything, however recondite. Beanfeast is derived from an old British or Celtic phrase, in use long anterior to the Saxon and Norman invasions of England, and means "bean," a woman, and "feist," a feast or festival, and was originally applied to a marriage breakfast, or other repast, to which women were invited. The word has long been lost to the English language, except in this instance, and in that of the proverb, "A bean in a monk's hood"—i.e., a woman dressed up as a monk. But its original Celtic meaning is still preserved in Ireland as "bean feis," and in the Highlands of Scotland as "bean feisd," and survives in England, though its first meaning has perished, to describe the annual symposia of the London workpeople, or those of other great cities and hives of industry, such as Manchester, Sheffield, and Birmingham. Those who manage beanfeasts do not, as a rule, seem to prefer picnics on the grass, but regular repasts in country inns or gardens, where they can sit down to well-prepared dinners, and lounge, and smoke, and play at skittles afterwards. They are usually the causes of much social enjoyment, and, being mostly presided over by the employers of the holiday-makers, have the happy effect of bridging over the cold dark gulf of caste that too often, in Great Britain, separates the working classes from the class that pays their wages. I have noticed—not with any pleasure—that the English workmen who make holiday in this fashion are much more obstreperous and boisterous than the French and German operatives, large numbers of whom are employed in London, and who conform, in

the observance of holidays, to the customs of the country in which their lot is cast. The English most commonly make for the nearest public-house on their arrival, and indulge in horse-play, the result, no doubt, of exuberant animal spirits, accompanied by the use of horribly profane language, which no amount of animal spirits can excuse. Why lads, from fifteen or sixteen up to twenty or more, should use coarser and filthier language than full-grown men is one of those things for which I am wholly unable to account, unless the young fools think it is manly to be blasphemous, in which case it is to be hoped that increasing years will teach them decency and wisdom. The French and Germans do not offend in this manner, and vile words very seldom escape from their lips. The Germans have a pleasant and praiseworthy habit of walking along the roads in companies of trained voices, singing part-songs to cheer them on the way—a habit in which it is earnestly to be hoped that the next generation of Englishmen, trained in the Board Schools, may be persuaded to imitate them.

The private parties of ladies and gentlemen, well to do in the world, who frequent Boxhill in the season, in numbers varying from half-a-dozen to a couple of dozen, are very numerous, and for the most part very decorously joyous. Suffering under the thralldom of too much sameness and civilisation, as well as of too much brick and mortar, and, worst of all, of too many servants, they enjoy the liberty and the license of the picnic, and the unaccustomed pleasure of shifting for themselves, waiting upon themselves, and tasting, though in a small degree, the untrammelled delights of savage and uncivilised life; in being hard up for water—at a loss for a cork-screw—sore put to it for the forgotten salt or pepper—but resolved to make the best of discomforts, and turn them into laughter and frolic. They come in omnibuses, broughams, four-horse coaches, and all sorts of vehicles; accompanied by agile cavaliers—if the word can be employed in such a sense—mounted on bicycles, who have to repress the velocity of their vehicles if they would not leave the horses behind; and the rear is generally brought up by a van well provided with potted meats, cold chicken, tongue, *pâté de foie gras*, and other convenient comestibles; with abundance of seltzer water, claret, champagne, and a reserve of cognac—not forgetting the omnipresent pale ale of Bass and Alsopp, which, being genuine,

good judges prefer to champagne which may be made of apples and rhubarb, or still more dishonest ingredients. It is easy to tell in a morning stroll on the hill where such parties have squatted on the previous day, by the broken champagne bottles and the abundant lobster shells and claws, and remnants of greasy newspapers that are scattered around. Lobsters and ladies, in the minds of this class of people, are always associated; and champagne and charming companions are fated to go together by all experienced caterers.

It is however on Easter Monday, Whitsun Monday, and the great festivals of St. Lubbock that the greatest crowds assemble on the hill. Easter and Whitsuntide are for the lower stratum of mechanics and petty shopkeepers. The festivals of St. Lubbock are for the intellectual workers and the clerkly classes, who, prior to the passing of the Bank Holiday Act, were compelled to serve in offices and warehouses, while humbler men held high revel with beer, tobacco, and bad language in "the green lanes of England." The young clerks and warehousemen of London, whose name is legion, seem to prefer the bicycle to all other modes of locomotion. People a little older and more sensible, who know from experience that walking is not only the cheapest but the best exercise that a man can take, travel by rail as far as Richmond, Clapham, or Croydon, or some other outlying suburb, and then start by shady and fragrant country roads, through pleasant villages, or through the valley of the Mole, by Leatherhead and Mickleham, gain appetite and health by the way, and taste more real enjoyment than is likely to fall to the lot of those who trust to steam, horses, or bicycle wheels for the means of less healthful propulsion. The great characteristic of these Monday "outings" of the people is noise—noise of shouting and hallooing lads—noise of screaming, yelling, and excited girls—and the more than abominable noises that form the attempts at music of young men who know no difference between joy and uproar, and who scarify the ears of all the true lovers of music with the hurly-burly, which suggests that old Highland woman's idea of the supreme bliss of Paradise—"ten thousand bagpipes, all playing at once, and all playing different tunes." I must confess that often, when I have heard the discordant hubbub of sounds made by a horn-player from Whitechapel or St. Giles's, out on his

holidays, I should have greatly rejoiced if I could have made him swallow his horn—without a prayer or a wish for his good digestion. But the uncharitableness is wrung from me—*en passant*—and must not be considered a part of my nature. But noise in all nations and in all ages, not only among men, but among the lower animals, is the accompaniment and result, or, to use a more fashionable word of the day, the "outcome" of all meriment and excess of animal spirits, so that excuses must be made, and not in vain, for the emancipated slaves of the office, the factory, and the shop, if they try in the fresh air the force of the lungs that have no fair play in the crowded streets of the metropolis, and if they express their enjoyment of unusual freedom by trumpet-sound, or something far worse, that sounds to them, however discordant it may be, as jollity. To eat and drink, and jump and gambol, and make a noise in the open air, is their protest against daily toil, municipal regulation, and excess of civilisation.

A picnic is, in one respect, a lottery. If it be fine weather on the day fixed upon, the result, if the company be worthy of a picnic, is a prize; if it be bad weather, as in our uncertain climate it too commonly is, the result is a blank, and a wet blanket cast over all anticipated enjoyment. Nevertheless, I have seen wet days in picnic time, when the picnicians—if such a word be coinable—have not only made the best of adverse circumstances, but like forlorn Ophelia, have turned "everything into favour and prettiness," and been jollier in the rain than they could have been in the sunshine. But all people are not philosophers, and do not know the sweet uses of adversity; or, as Emerson says, have not the instinct of the oyster, "that mends its broken shell with pearl." If the rain descends suddenly, and as suddenly ceases, nobody is much hurt, unless it be the women-folk of the servant-girl and shop-girl class, with their cheap and tawdry finery, who speedily become limp, woe-begone, and more or less out of humour. If the rain be persistent, the public-house becomes the refuge of a multitude who cannot all be refreshed or entertained by the limited supplies of the host, and who cannot, as they themselves very often lugubriously allege, procure "heavy wet" enough from the publican to make amends for the heavy wet of the unpitying and relentless heavens.

The last Bank Holiday brought greater



crowds to Boxhill than ever assembled upon it before, nineteen-twentieths of whom came from the metropolis; the upper, commercial, and educated class, the future merchants, manufacturers, and wholesale traders of London were less numerous than usual, and possibly went farther afield for their day's pleasure, either to inhale the refreshing breezes of the sea, or to escape at quieter places the inconvenient pressure of the multitude. The artisans, the day labourers, the servant girls, and the smaller order of retail traders and assistants, had the hill almost to themselves, and found amusement after their own fashion, favoured with weather of unsurpassable beauty, hot, but not too hot, sunny, but not too sunny, with a fresh wind blowing from the north, and a flavour of the west in it, to make it thoroughly delicious. "But let not him that putteth on his armour boast like him that putteth it off." As Wordsworth beautifully sings:

Not seldom, clad in radiant vest,  
Deceitfully goes forth the morn;  
Not seldom evening in the west  
Sinks smilingly, forsworn!

And so it happened in this instance. Towards evening dense banks of dark clouds gathered in the west, and soon overspread the whole visible sky; while sudden flashes of forked lightning on the distant horizon betokened that a storm was approaching. Fortunate were they who came by rail and could return under cover. Unfortunate were they who had come by open vans and dog-carts—and there were some thousands in this predicament—and who had to return by the way and in the mode in which they had come. Ere they were two miles on their homeward route, the rain came down in torrents, the thunder roared, and the lightning flashed all around them, about them, and above them, frightening the horses, and frightening the women, if possible, still more. These women, as a rule, were dressed out after the fashion of the humbler classes, whose poor vanity it is to imitate the gaudy attire, the muslin, the laces, the feathers, and the ribbons of the rich and comfortable, and to sacrifice all the comfort and decency of substantial under-clothing to the miserable and worthless finery which they cannot afford, and which does not become them. Woeful was the plight of many hundreds of these girls and young women, who, had they been dressed in the sensible attire of their com-

peers on the continent of Europe—and in any country in the world except Great Britain and America—might have borne unmoved the pelting of the storm, however pitiless, and been none the worse the day afterwards.

During all the time in which I have observed the crowds that favour Boxhill with their presence in the summer, mid-summer, and early autumn, I never heard but of one serious casualty, and that was a tragedy. A portly clerk or warehouseman, of advanced middle age, who had not taken a holiday for twenty years, was so excited by the unusual freedom of his tardy escape from business, by the beauty of the scenery, by the frolicsomeness of all the surroundings, and, perhaps—I do not hint it uncharitably—by an extra amount of beer or alcohol, which his system was unable to bear, that he took to running, as if he were a boy (possibly thinking himself one) down the steep side of the hill towards a little wicket-gate that opens on to the public road. He ran, and ran; and the impetus he acquired was so great that he could not stop himself. The end was that he fell head-foremost against the supporting post of the gate, dashed his head against it, and died in two minutes! The moral to be drawn from this accident is, if a moral is to be drawn from anything, first, that when a man is out for his holiday he should refrain from taking too much stimulant; and, secondly, that he should make his holidays so frequent—say twice in a year, and not once in twenty years—as to deprive them of the unwontedness which overthrew the balance of this poor man's nature. Take your holidays periodically, enjoy and do not abuse them!

#### WHAT WAS IT?

THERE was nothing in the weather to produce a morbid state of mind, nothing in my surroundings, or the book I was reading, to account for the facts I am about to relate. I have no particular theory to put forward in connection with them. I only say they are facts, and if anyone can tell me the meaning of them, I shall feel much obliged. So, without any further preface, I will tell you to what I refer.

On a lovely afternoon in March, 1875, I was lying on my sofa reading an article in Kingsley's *Miscellanies*, I think called *Chalk Streams*, but at any rate, that was the subject treated of.

Taking a keen interest in the writer's style, I was fully absorbed in what I read, until I was arrested by the feeling that someone was looking intently at me. Now, when I took up my book for my usual afternoon's treat of a quiet read, when the servants had gone to dinner, and everything was still, there was no one in the room. The room was large, and my sofa at the end farthest from the door, which had opened without my noticing it, and our man-servant, Pearson, stood in the entrance, as I afterwards observed. But my first impression was that someone strongly wished to attract my attention, and on looking up from my book, I saw a man standing a few yards away from me resting his hand on a chair, and with such an earnest expression in his eyes, as I have never seen on any face before or since. Being a stranger in the place, I naturally thought of a visitor, annoyed at having to stand unnoticed, and went forward to apologise for having been so absorbed in my book that I had not observed his entrance. But as I walked towards him (noting with surprise that he was dressed in a suit of clothes exactly resembling one my husband had worn a year before) I found myself alone. That is to say, my visitor was gone, but at the farther end of the room stood Pearson, holding the door, and apparently looking hard at the spot which he had just left. For a moment I thought I must have been dreaming, and that possibly my servant also existed only in my imagination, so I put it to the test by asking, "Has anyone called this afternoon?"

"No, ma'am," was the answer, and without any explanation of his own appearance at the door, the man left the room. Still I determined to test myself, and looking at the clock I saw I had been lying down ten minutes, repeated to myself the gist of what I thought I had read, took up my book again, and in ten minutes more had reached the same point.

It seemed then evident that I had not wandered from the subject, and it was not one which could in any way excite my imagination, or bring to mind the person whose story I will presently tell you. Some hours later, when my husband came in, I mentioned the circumstance to him. His first question naturally was: "But did you not know the face?" To which I could only answer: "Well, I did and I did not. That is to say, it is perfectly familiar to me, and yet the expression was so unlike any I have ever seen, that I cannot tell

whose face it was. But the suit of clothes he had on, I could swear were those you gave Ramsay last year. Who he was, or why he didn't say what he was so anxious to say, I can't imagine, but I shall never forget the look on his face. It was intensely grave, and yet it seemed lighted up by a most earnest wish to speak, and to me personally, for he looked straight into my eyes."

We talked over it again and again, and I mentioned it to one or two intimate friends; but having no idea that any explanation of the circumstance would ever be likely to come before us, I unfortunately did not make a note of the day on which it happened. But in as short a time as a letter could reach us from home—we were in a garrison town abroad—my husband received a letter from a sergeant, who had been employed on civil duty under him the previous year. It contained these words: "You will be sorry to hear your old servant, Ramsay, is dead." We wrote to express our regret, and to ask for any particulars of his last illness, which must have been short, as we had left him in health two months previously. The answer was this: "Ramsay died in hospital. I have made enquiries, and have learnt that he died raving, and calling incessantly for Mrs. H." That was myself, and this is Ramsay's story:

Two years previous to the time of which I am writing, I chanced to be sitting in a Highland cemetery, when a poor man, bent with sickness, laid himself down to rest in the sunshine a little way from where I sat. His face interested me, and I felt sure he had, as they say, seen better days. I remarked to the friend who was with me, that it seemed to be rather false sentiment to sit decorating a grave as we were doing, whilst we let a fellow-creature go away to starve, without holding out a hand. By this time the man had gone, but we agreed to find him, and a few days afterwards succeeded in doing so. He had been a private in the —th, his father a gentleman, his mother a poor Scotch lassie, who loved him so well, that she deserted her little one when he was four years old, to follow the father's fortunes, and was heard of no more excepting through such rumours as wrung the boy's heart, remembering and loving her to the last, as I can vouch that he did. I came to know these things by degrees, for after we had found that there was no nursing or comfort to be had in the little hut where he lived with an old aunt, who worked in

the fields for their mutual support, we had him taken to the infirmary. Many a time have I sat by his bed, thinking it might be the last, for he had a complication of disorders, and the doctors feared the worst; and between spasms of pain which left the poor face covered with moisture, and the hands, which lay on the coverlet, trembling, poor Ramsay would tell me all his sad story. How he supposed he had inherited some of his father's feelings, for he never felt at home or happy with his comrades; and yet how he hated him, and longed only to find his mother, and hear her speak lovingly to him once before he died. We put advertisements in the papers for him, as he thought he had some clue to her late history. But it was all useless; no answers came, and he gave up all hope on that subject, and was resigned to die. It happened that we were then leaving Scotland for two months, and, with many regrets, I said good-bye to my poor protégé, exacting a promise that he should write if I could do anything for him. He wrote to me several times, each time giving a more cheerful account of himself, and at last saying that he was so much better as to be about to be discharged. It was a doubtful blessing, as it seemed to him, poor fellow, for he had no home, and no means of support, and was not strong enough to obtain work. However, we were just then about to return to Scotland, and we took him into our house to train as a servant. He learnt everything quickly and well. I found plenty of my husband's clothes which I could give him; and with enough of the gentleman in him to refine his manner, and of the soldier to make him methodical, we thought he did credit to the house. For a time all went on well; but whether sudden prosperity spoilt him, or what, I cannot say. I only know he was a changed person; lazy, untidy, unwilling, and, going from bad to worse, he made the other servants discontented, untruthful, and even dishonest. So there was no help for it; he had to go, and he went. It was a great disappointment to both my husband and myself, for we had hoped to take him abroad with us, and he had seemed most anxious to go. This, however, we agreed to forget. The man was strong and able to work, and had, moreover, learnt to be a good servant, and we had left him filling the place of waiter at a club, where there was every prospect of his doing well, if he profited by his former experience, and was steady.

This was what we said to each other when we spoke of him last, before going abroad in February, 1875, and we heard no more of him till he was dead.

I can see all the weak points in the story, and am quite prepared to be asked, if what I saw was indeed my late servant, why did I not recognise him, and, above all, how could I mistake him for a visitor? This is the only explanation I give to myself. In the first place, I had known the face well when death was in near prospect, and anxious thoughts filled the mind; but since then the man had grown strong, and I had been accustomed to see him in health so long, that the recollection of his illness had passed away for the time. But the face I saw at last was the one I had seen at first, dying, and in earnest, with the added regret that he had been ungrateful (which I, who know the man, could well understand that he would feel), giving an intentness to the speechless look which was the last he was to give. I remember one day in his illness, when he had been talking of his mother, and other things which troubled him, and I had given him such comfort as I could, he said: "Ma'am, you must forgive a dying man for saying you are the only woman who has ever been good to him. I mean something better than if I called you a 'lady.'" The doubt as to whether I should understand or be offended at his speech was expressed so strongly in his face, that the matron of the hospital, who stood beside me, at once said: "I am sure the lady is glad you think that of her, but sorry you won't cheer up about yourself." And then I found voice to say "Yes," and went away. It was the last time I saw him as an invalid.

All very well, you will say, but don't tell me you can mistake your man-servant for an equal, and stand up to receive him as a visitor!

I can only answer again, I have told you the facts as they happened. Perhaps, I have my own crude ideas as to the meaning of them, perhaps, I have not; but at any rate, I am not going to enter into them now. I will only remind you that, as far as appearances went, the man was a gentleman. He had gentle birth on one side, was always refined in his manners, and moreover, was dressed in a suit of clothes of which no gentleman need have been ashamed.

That is all I can tell you about it. But there is one odd fact as a pendant to this little story.

The man Pearson, whom we had just brought all the way from the Ultima Thule of the ancients at great expense, gave warning that day, because he said "the house was haunted." He gave no explanation, and I said nothing, as the reason of his sudden wish to go only reached me through my maid. You will remember that he stood at the door, apparently having shown in my mysterious visitor.

Had his notice to quit come a day later, I should have said he had heard other servants speak of the circumstance, in houses where I had mentioned it. But he gave it that day, and before I had spoken of it at all. Nor have I heard, up to this moment, what he meant. Puzzled, but not alarmed myself, I would not risk frightening my household, so when my maid told me what he had said, I only replied "nonsense!" and that was the end of it. He left us, and the news of Ramsay's death came after he had gone, or I think I should have felt inclined then to question him.

#### OSMAN OSMANDSEN.

The following little story has been sent to me by a valued correspondent. Agreeing with him that Osman Osmandsen's gallant exploit well deserves public mention, I gladly give it all the publicity in my power.—ED. ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

On the 26th August, 1877, the Norwegian barque *Hirundo* fell in with the Norwegian barque *Skibladner*. The *Hirundo* had a crew of eight men, including the captain and mate. The captain of the *Hirundo* went on board the *Skibladner*, and learnt that the first and second mates and the master's wife were sick with yellow fever, and the captain so weak that he had been unable to write up the log, or take an observation. He asked the captain of the *Hirundo* to keep company with him till the afternoon, and to take an observation for him. This was done, and the ships parted.

On the 1st of September the *Hirundo* again sighted the *Skibladner*, with all sails set, and shaking her main topsail aback, and signals of distress flying. The *Hirundo* steered towards the other ship, which sent a boat and two men to the *Hirundo*. One of these men, the steward, stated that the fever was worse, that the captain's wife and the first mate were dead, that the second mate and one seaman were very ill, that the captain was very sick, and that they had no one competent to navigate the

ship. The captain of the *Hirundo* went on board the *Skibladner*, and, having seen the sick captain, returned to his own ship, and asked Osman Osmandsen, his first mate, to take charge of the *Skibladner*. The captain of the *Hirundo* was badly ruptured, and feared that he might have caught the fever by visiting the infected vessel, and Osman Osmandsen was the only other person competent to navigate a ship. Nevertheless, in order to save the lives of the crew of the *Skibladner* and the ship itself, Osman agreed to go. On taking charge of the ship, the crew consisted of nine men, of whom the captain, the second mate, and one seaman, had the fever. There was one passenger, or landsman, also ill.

The captain of the *Hirundo* instructed Osman as to the medicines for the sick. Osman then steered a course for Liverpool, he and the steward taking alternate watches. Osman also visited the sick regularly, and administered medicine to them.

On the 5th of September the second mate died, on the 6th the captain and the sick seaman died, and on the same day Osman was taken seriously ill. The next day he was delirious; but on the third day he recovered sufficiently to do duty. On the 14th, another seaman was taken ill, and on the 17th he died. On the 11th October the *Skibladner* arrived off the Great Ormshead, and was taken in tow by a tug. During this time Osman was not only commander and officer, but worked as a common seaman.

In a salvage suit the judge, Sir Robert Phillimore, said: "It is impossible to praise too highly the gallantry of this man Osman Osmandsen, or to doubt that the preservation of those on board the *Skibladner* was due to his courage and skill. The navigation of this vessel to Liverpool took more than forty days." And he awarded six hundred pounds to Osman for his services.

It seems to me that this instance of calm heroism is worthy of being more widely known than from the Admiralty Reports, vol. iii. page 24.

If Norway have any order of merit, no man could better deserve such a decoration.

#### AN ISLAND PRINCESS.

BY THEO. GIFT.

A STORY IN SEVEN CHAPTERS. CHAPTER V.

BUT that moment had been enough for Keith Fenwick. He had seen that look in an enraged bull's eyes more than once before, and the driving rush before which



matador and banderillero had gone down in the dust of the Arena de las Corridas in fair Seville; and as the animal lowered its head he threw both arms round Jean, tearing the cloak from her, and almost flinging her to the ground among the bushes on one side of him. The next minute he was stumbling dizzily to his feet, having been knocked off them himself by the bull's charge, and being only saved from tossing by the fact of the brute's horns having got entangled in Jean's big cloak, while at the same time the shouts of the two other men hurrying to the rescue, and the crashing of bushes in every direction, told that the brief danger was already over, and the drove had been put to flight and was in full stampede up the valley.

Jean had risen to her feet also. Her white dress was torn, and her hair ruffled, and her face very pale—so pale that, despite her previous assertion on the subject, Keith thought she was just going to faint, and instinctively he put one arm round her to save her from falling; but Jean had no such idea, and there was even a little nervous laugh on her lips as she looked up at him.

"Did he knock you over, Mr. Fenwick?" she said. "But it was our own fault for not looking in front of us. They would never have moved if we had kept out of their way."

"Are you sure you are not hurt?" said Keith, looking down at her. She looked so fair, and pale, and pretty, standing there within his arm in her little white gown, and with the chilly morning breeze blowing on her bare neck and arms, that he felt a sudden tenderness which was more than anxiety for her, and which was intensified by the nervous tremble which he could still feel running through his limbs. "I am afraid you must be, you look so pale, and I threw you down so roughly." But Jean only laughed again, disengaging herself from his arm at the same moment by a quick though quiet movement, and there was her usual saucy brightness in her eyes as she answered:

"Yes, you were not quite so languid and composed in your actions as usual; but I'm not hurt, and I forgive you; though I believe that you knocked me down on purpose that I mightn't tease you for coming to a similar fate through Mr. Bull. Don't you think he did, Mr. Chandler? Why, Lucy, you don't mean to say that you are such a little coward as to be still

hiding among the bushes! Why, every horn is half a mile off by now."

It was evident that Jean was not going to make much of the accident, or to be sentimentalised over. Indeed, she seemed so unconscious of any real risk to life in it that Keith felt half angry, half ashamed at his own late emotion; and young Wanklyn returning at that moment with the cloak, which he had picked up, a good deal soiled and damaged, at some distance, they resumed their way home more briskly, and reached the settlement in another twenty minutes. Only as they came up to the gate of the Conistons' house Keith turned to Jean, who since their adventure had kept closely at Mr. Chandler's side, and said:

"You were asking me about England, Miss Coniston, and how our ways differed from yours. I'll tell you one difference. We don't keep herds of wild cattle roaming about the outskirts of our towns, to gore and trample on every young lady who ventures out for a country walk. Good heavens! what a thinning of girls' schools processions there would be if we did!"

"But then we have no girls' schools at all here," said Jean, as if that were quite a counterbalancing merit, "so we don't need to provide for them; and those were not wild cattle, but what we call half-tame ones. I've often before been chased by one for a little way; and if we hadn't frightened that old fellow he wouldn't have run at us. I won't have you abuse the island because you've had a little fright."

It was on Keith's lips to say that the fright was entirely on her account and occasioned by her; but the others were saying good-bye and he refrained, and simply held out his hand with the remark that he saw his boat waiting for him at the jetty, and must make haste to get on board; but Jean took his hand and held it.

"Indeed, no. You are coming in to have some coffee first. I see smoke from the kitchen chimney, so old Mary is up and will make us some; and when papa wakes we will tell him about our adventure. Come."

But Keith could not wait for Mr. Coniston's waking, though he did not withdraw his hand from the clasp of the small warm fingers, and even suffered them to lead him into the kitchen, where, as she supposed, a bright peat fire was already burning redly in the huge grate; and where a tidy old Irishwoman was bustling about,

broom in hand, and full of wonder and scoldings at Miss Jean's "daringness in walkin' home. Shure, an' it was just like her to dhrame of such a thing; and the mather in bed and s'leepin' for the last hour."

The kettle was already singing on the glowing turf, and Jean herself got out the coffee-pot and cups and set them on the table, chattering gaily all the while. Keith stood by the hearth, looking at her as she flitted about, her light dress pinned up out of the way, and the pretty dark rings of her loosened hair curling about her neck. He let her bring him his coffee, and drank it almost in silence, while she sat on the edge of the low broad fender, sipping her own, and warming her cheeks into something of their wonted glow at the ruddy blaze. Then a clock struck somewhere, and Keith started, looked at his watch, and set down his cup, saying hurriedly:

"That is seven. I must go, really, or I shall get into trouble. Good-bye, Miss Coniston; I hope you will feel none the worse for the fatigue of last night and this morning."

He put out his hand, and Jean put both hers into it. She did not rise from the fender, but she lifted her head and looked up at him with the sweetest look that ever shone in a girl's eyes.

"Good-bye, Mr. Fenwick," she said, "and thank you very much. If you hadn't been so quick I might have been badly hurt; and though we are used to accidents here, it would have grieved papa dreadfully if anything had happened to me. He will be heartily grateful to you when he hears about it, for he is very fond of me. He has no one else now, you know." And then she unclasped her hands from his, and let him go; and Keith went away, recanting all the hard things he had ever thought of her, and wondering if it was the firelight, or if there had really been a moisture in the lovely brown eyes; and how soon he could get to see them again.

Nevertheless, the very next time they met they fell out on some trifle or another; and a little while later they came to a regular quarrel, and this time a serious one.

Mrs. Wanklyn, her brother-in-law, and Jean had undertaken to ride with three or four of the officers to a certain point, where they could leave their horses and walk to a marsh where wild duck and widgeon could be shot by the dozen; and the party had started accordingly. But on coming to the point where the horses were to be left,

the young widow declared herself tired, and decided to remain where she was and rest herself while the men went on for their shooting. The fact is, she was flirting rather pronouncedly with her old admirer, the naval surgeon; and the latter instantly begged to be allowed to stay with her and Miss Coniston to take care of them; averring that he was not much of a sportsman, and preferred ladies' society to gunning at any time.

Jean listened to the avowal with some scorn.

"I am not going to stay," she said, "I am going with the others. I promised I would. It is a lovely walk, and I think you are very lazy, Margaret."

"Lazy, after a seven miles' ride!" echoed Mrs. Wanklyn. "Jean, you are tireless. Besides, I know there is a dreadful bog to get through. You had much better not attempt it."

"Oh, Miss Coniston, please do," cried two of the midshipmen despairingly, "you said you would show it to us;" but Fenwick broke in, in his most decisive tones:

"Whatever Miss Coniston said, we couldn't wish or expect her to go off with us by herself, and as Mrs. Wanklyn says, seven miles is quite enough fatigue for a lady."

"It is not enough for me," said Jean quickly, "I'm not a bit tired; and you're quite right," turning to the exultant boys, "I did say I'd go with you, and I will. We'll come back to Mrs. Wanklyn when you've had enough sport. Make haste," and off she went, nodding gaily to the widow, and with a youngster on either side of her in high glee. Keith shrugged his shoulders slightly and followed. What a girl, to be willing to wander off with a lot of wild young officers, and without even a father or brother to look after her! Of course Mrs. Wanklyn should not have permitted it, or should have gone herself. He did not know which to blame most severely, and marched on without speaking to anyone.

There was worse, however, to come.

After climbing down sundry rocky slopes covered with the pretty white and lilac blossoms of the scurvy-grass—a plant very similar to our wood-sorrel—and patches of diddledee, at present one sheet of scarlet berries, they came to the bog, or rather marsh, Mrs. Wanklyn had stigmatised; a wide reed-grown expanse, fringing the sea and running up a mile or

more inland. A large flock of water-birds and more than one covey of snipe was plainly visible on the other side. The day was still and hazy, and you could hear their low, sharp cries over the brown waters of the marsh, where the afternoon sunlight was lying like a faint yellow stain. The question was, however, how to get across. Young Wanklyn said that they would have to go up to the hills and skirt round the upper extremity; but Jean differed.

"That is such a long way, and if we go down to the sea there we can cross where it is sandy. There is foothold enough. I am sure of it, George;" and of course she had her way, and led the party in that direction. In fact there was foothold at first, and Jean triumphed.

"See what a round I have saved you," she said gaily. "Are you not glad I came? I knew there was a path here——" and then she stopped short; for just in front of her, and hitherto hidden by the reeds, was a strip of water, where the sea and marsh had mingled, twenty feet in width and three or four inches deep.

"Just what I thought," said Wanklyn. "Easy enough for us to get over with our long boots; but it was you I was thinking of, Jean. What are you to do? We shall have to go back after all, unless I carry you across."

Wanklyn was a stout, rather coarse-mannered young man, and involuntarily Keith Fenwick flushed up. It was a relief to him that Jean took it as a jest.

"No, thank you, I'd rather not. Is it really above my boots? Oh, how provoking." For a moment she stood hesitating, first glancing across the water and then along the way they had come. It would be a long round back, and the little middy near, a delicate boy who had got punished rather severely by his seven miles' jolting over the hills, was looking pale.

"I could take off my boots and socks and ford it," he ventured to say wistfully, and Jean smiled at him.

"Of course, and so can I. I've done it a dozen times when I've been by myself," she answered; and stooped to draw off her boot on the instant, resting her pretty little hand for support on the boy's shoulder.

Wanklyn said, "Bravo, Jean!" but an ugly laugh came on the face of one of the officers, the Mr. Swanage Keith always disliked, and he whispered in the latter's ear:

"Ay, and of course our island Venus

didn't bring us this way that she might do it again, and give us a chance of admiring her ankle! I like these colonial girls, eh Fenwick?"

Keith turned on him. He was not a passionate man in general, but at that moment a wild impulse came over him, to knock his brother officer down with one blow in the mouth which had so spoken. His fist doubled itself, and his face went white with rage as it was; so white, that the other started and shrank back, as though the blow had been dealt indeed.

"Swanage," said the young man, hoarsely, "Miss Coniston is an innocent girl, supposed to be under the protection of gentlemen; and you are nothing but a low blackguard;" with which he turned his back on him, and passing the others, addressed Jean in a low tone.

"You are joking, are you not? Of course none of us would dream of allowing you to do such a thing; but you were not in earnest, surely!"

"Why not?" said Jean. There was a sort of suppressed authority in Keith's tone, which annoyed her and prepared her to resist. "I often do it when I am out; that is just how I get across country so quickly. It's the most natural idea in the world."

"When you are by yourself, yes," said Keith, with emphasis; "but naturally you wouldn't choose such a resource when there is no necessity for it. Tom Brabant—with a stern glance at the little middy—" "hadn't the least idea, I am sure, of expecting a young lady to do what would be very well in a boy like himself; but is certainly not the thing for her."

He still spoke in a tone studiously suppressed, but with a meaning that was unmistakable. Perhaps it was a trifle too unmistakable. Jean, irritated before, was stung now. What right had he to tell her that what she proposed doing—such a simple matter too—was not "the thing" for her to do? It might not be "the thing" in England; but what was England to her, this island girl, whose actions were governed only by the simple law of right and wrong; and were these, her guests, to presume to dictate to her, a lady in her own land?

"I do not know what Tom Brabant expects, but his suggestion was a very good one, and I am certainly going to follow it," she retorted, with a backward toss of her small head. "You needn't trouble yourself to take care of me, I assure

you, Mr. Fenwick. I am quite capable of doing so for myself, and I am not afraid of a little cold water."

Keith lifted his hat and moved aside at once.

"Excuse me," he said haughtily, "my care was not for you, but for the womanly delicacy which I gave you credit for possessing. Pray let me apologise for my absurd mistake in so doing," with which he marched straight on, crossed the shallow water, and never looked at her again. Had he done so he would have seen that Jean had turned as white as death. She made no answer, however, but deliberately finished stripping two of the prettiest little dimpled feet ever seen out of marble, and followed the rest of the party through the ford so swiftly and daintily, that even Swanage could not say he had seen more than the gleam of a round white ancle as she came out on the other side.

They had capital sport that day, and returned to the spot where Mrs. Wanklyn, her medical friend, and the servants were awaiting them, with full game-bags and in high spirits; but everyone noticed that Jean was quieter than usual; and she and Keith never once spoke to or looked at one another, even during the lunch under the rocks, or the homeward ride in the gloaming. There had been a previous arrangement, however, that he and the two boys were to return to tea at her father's house, and accordingly, after parting with the rest of the party at Mrs. Wanklyn's door, Keith pushed on his horse, caught up Miss Coniston at her own gate, and jumped down that he might help her to dismount. He was not quick enough, however. Jean was already on her feet and facing him, one hand resting lightly on the pommel of her saddle, while with the other she gathered up the dark folds of her riding-habit. The hills were growing grey with twilight; but the evening sky was full of a pale red light. It seemed reflected back from Jean's pale face as she looked up at him; and a small cool wind blew out of the west, and ruffled the purpling waters of

the loch and the hair about her throat and brow. Long afterwards, Keith, thinking about it all, could see her as she looked then, and hear the proud ring in her clear young voice.

"Good-night, Mr. Fenwick," she said, very quickly. "I cannot ask you to come in. If I did you might tell me again that I was wanting in womanly delicacy; and I have never been used to being told that by any man, or woman either. For the future you must say of me what you please; but nothing to me—nothing any more."

The two midshipmen were talking to Mr. Coniston inside the little garden. Someone else came up the road, and she went into the house quickly before Keith could answer. The new-comer had a great bunch of hardy flowers, sweet williams and pansies and her favourite yellow wallflowers, to present to the princess. He was in such a hurry that he almost jostled against Fenwick, and then started and uttered a half-exclamation as he caught sight of the other's white and rigid face. The young man sprang on his horse again, and rode down the white shadowy road at such a pace that when Jean turned in the doorway, half wondering if he were sorry, he was already nearly out of sight.

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